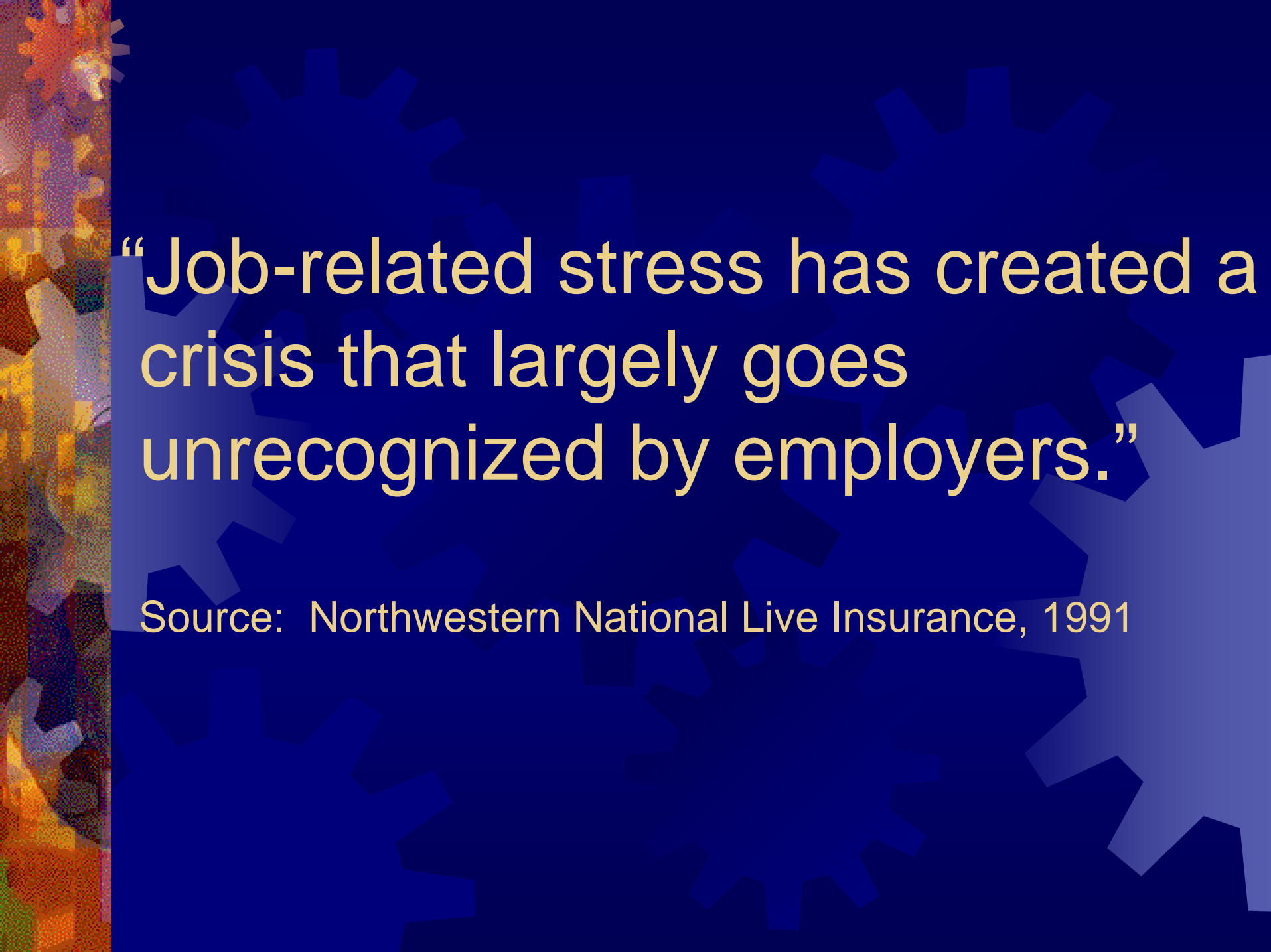




# Occupational Stress

Michelle Filipo, R.N



“Job-related stress has created a crisis that largely goes unrecognized by employers.”

Source: Northwestern National Live Insurance, 1991



# Seminar Objectives

Identify How the Structure of Work and Organizational Characteristics Impact worker health.

- Physiologic Responses to Stress
- Psychological Disorders Among Workers
- Behavioral Responses



# Seminar Objectives

Identify the Impact of Worker Stress on Organizations

- Increased Absenteeism
- Increased Rates of Illness
- Poor Morale
- Decreased Productivity



# Seminar Objectives

## Identify Sources of Job Stress

- Psychological Demand
- Decision Latitude
  - Skill Discretion
  - Autonomy
- Social Support



# Seminar Objectives

Discover Strategies for Preventing and Controlling Adverse Effects of Work Related Stress

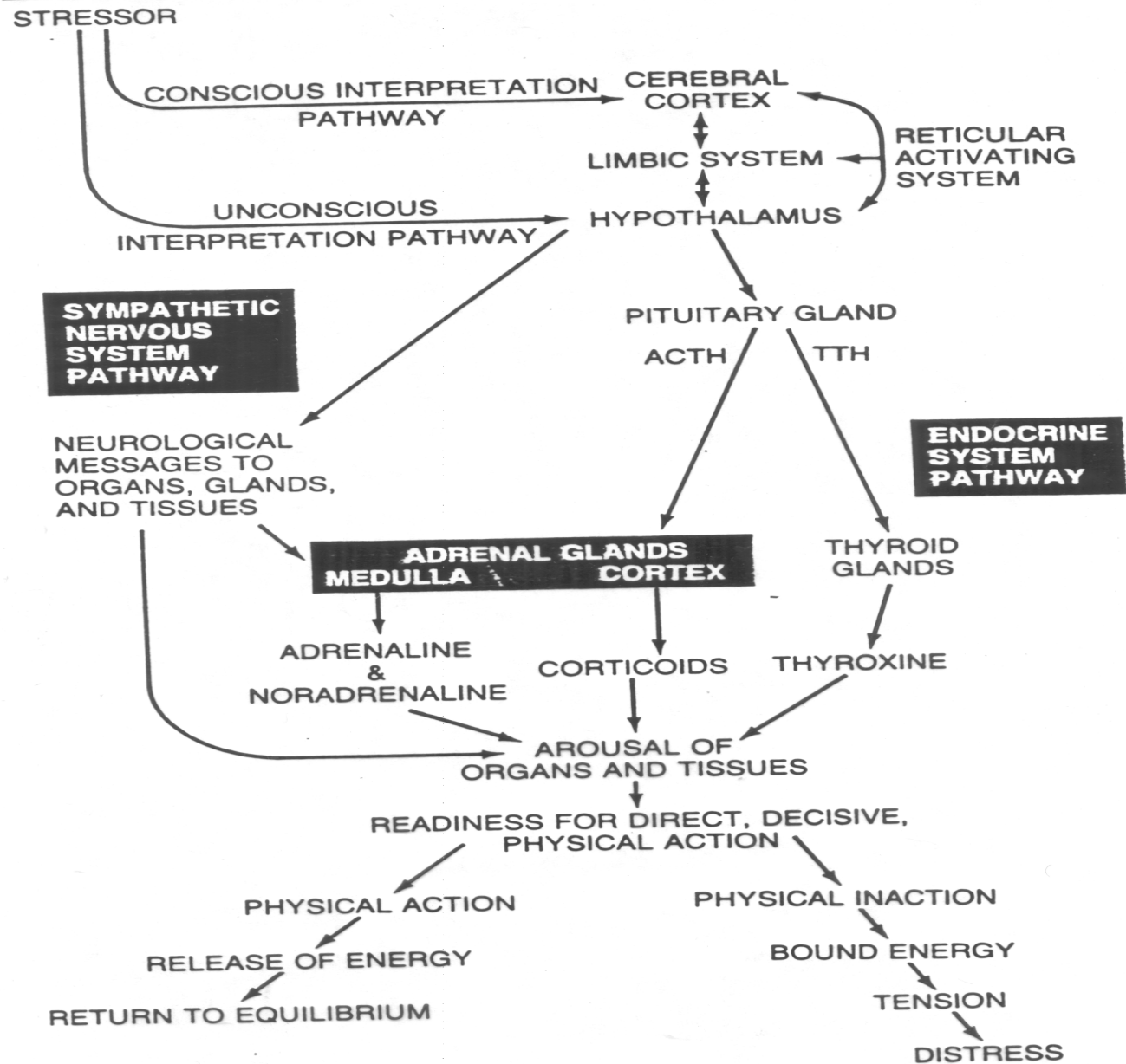
- Stress Management Programs
- Quick Fix Stress Reducers
- Lifestyle Wellness
- Quick on the Job De-stressors

# Stress Response Physiology 101

## **Fight or Flight Response**

- Basic (Necessary) to All Animals
- Short Term Arousal is Taxing for the Body but not Toxic
- Long Term Arousal Creates Difficulties with Relaxation and Contribute to Stress Related Disease.

**FIGURE 2-4 The Stress Response**



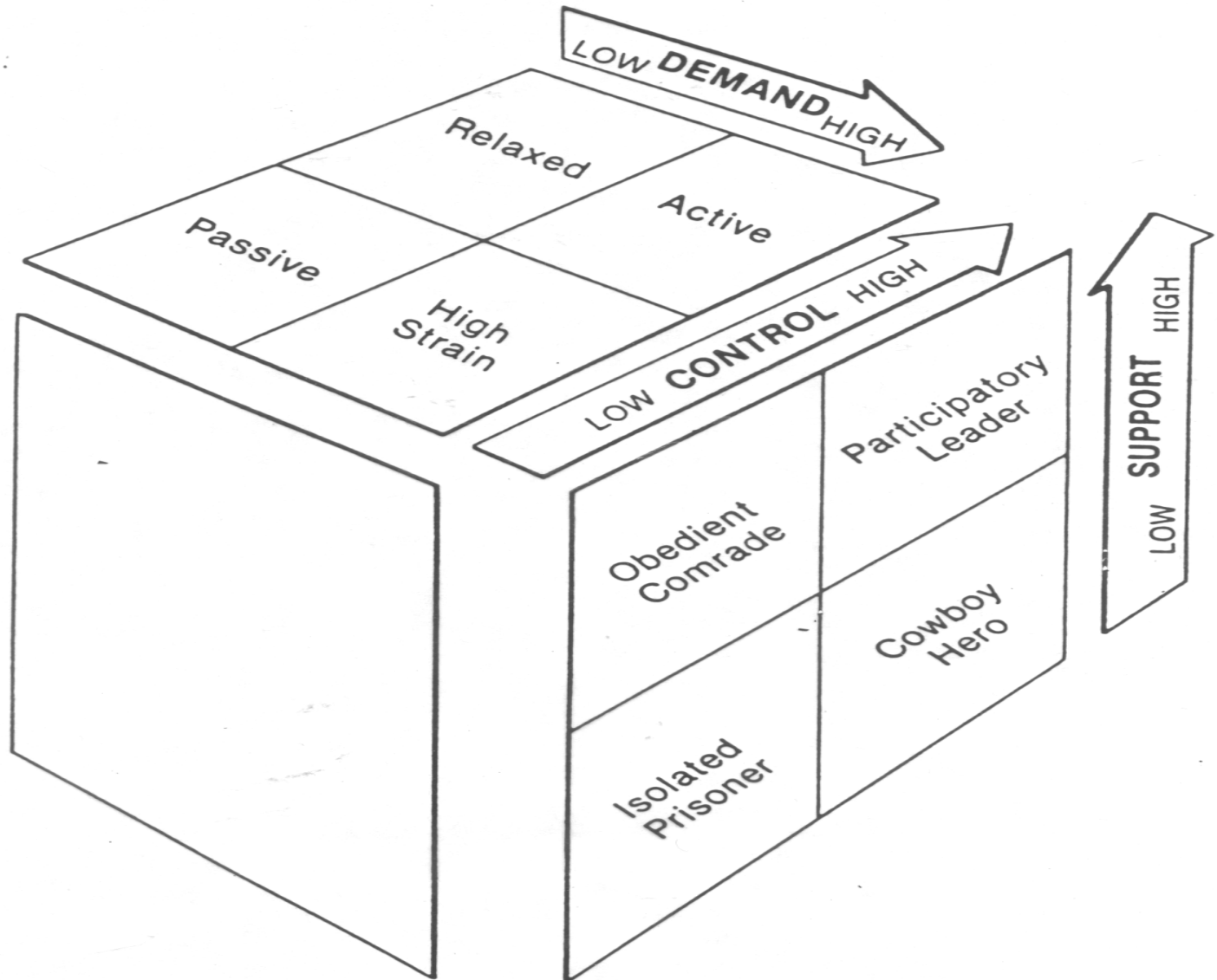




# Demand/Control Model

Worker stress arises from an imbalance between the demands and decision latitude (or control) in the workplace.

**FIGURE 2-8**  
*A 3-dimensional model of the psychosocial work environment*





# Psychological Demands

## **Best Case Scenario**

- Job has Predictable, Routine Demands Mixed with New Learning
- Magnitude of Demands is Mediated by Interpersonal Decision Making Between Parties with Relatively Equal Status.



# Decision Latitude: Skill Discretion

## **Best Case Scenario**

- The Job Offers Possibilities to Make the Maximum Use of the Skill and Provides Opportunities to Increase Skills on the Job.
- New Technologies are Created in the Workers Hands, Improving Production Power.



# Decision Latitude: Autonomy

## **Best Case Scenario**

- Workers have Influence Over Selection of Work Routines and Work Colleagues and Can Participate in Long Term Planning.
- Interfaces with Machinery or Technology Allows the Worker to Assume Control.



# Social Relations

## Best Case Scenario

- Social Contacts are Encouraged as a Basis for New Learning and are Augmented by New Telecommunications Technologies.
- New Contacts Multiply the Possibilities for Self-Realization through Collaboration.



# Four Types of Work

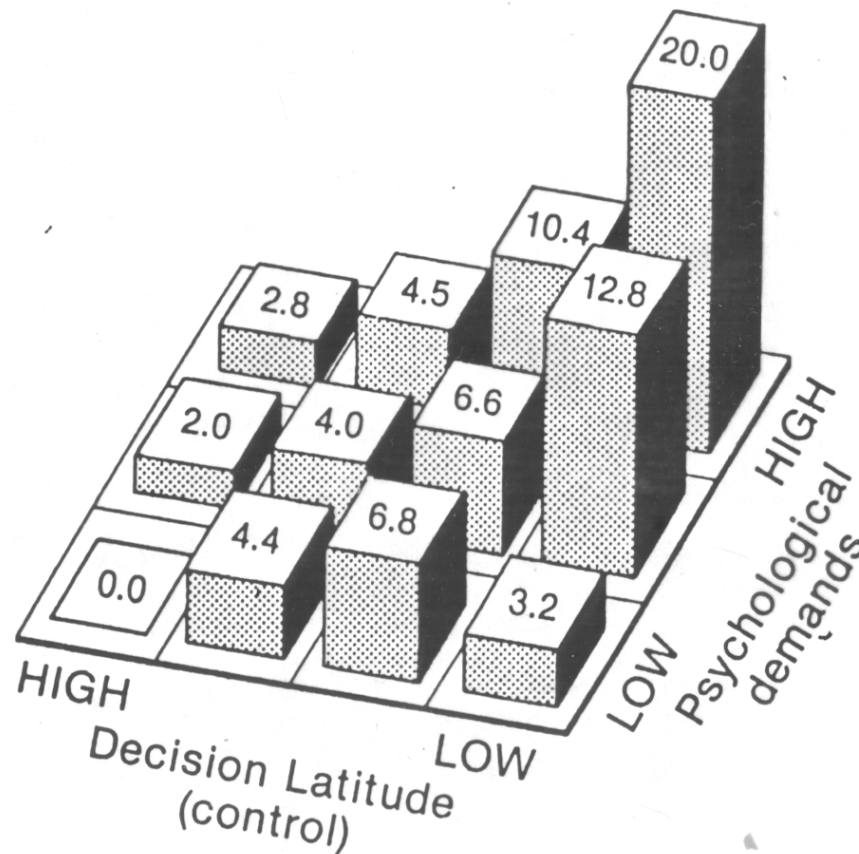
## 1. High Strain Jobs

Psychological Demands of the Job are High and the Decision Latitude is Low.

- Result in the Most Severe Adverse Physiological Outcomes
- Highest Risk for Cardiac Disease

FIGURE 1-1  
*Job characteristics and heart disease prevalence*  
*(Swedish males, 1974, N = 1,621; see p. 123)*

Number on vertical bar is percentage in each job category with symptoms.



SOURCE: Redrawn from Karasek et al. 1981. Reprinted by permission of the *American Journal of Public Health*.



# Four Types of Work

## 2. Active Jobs

Demands High Levels of Performance but the Workers' Decision Latitude is Also High.

- Highest Level of Learning and Growth
- Most Likely to Enjoy Leisure and Recreation Outside of Work

# Four Types of Work

## 3. Low Strain Jobs

The Workers Decision Latitude is High but the Psychological Demands of Work are Low.

(Utopia)

- Low Levels of Psychological and Physical Strain are Anticipated.
- Highest Level of Creativity and Problem-Solving.

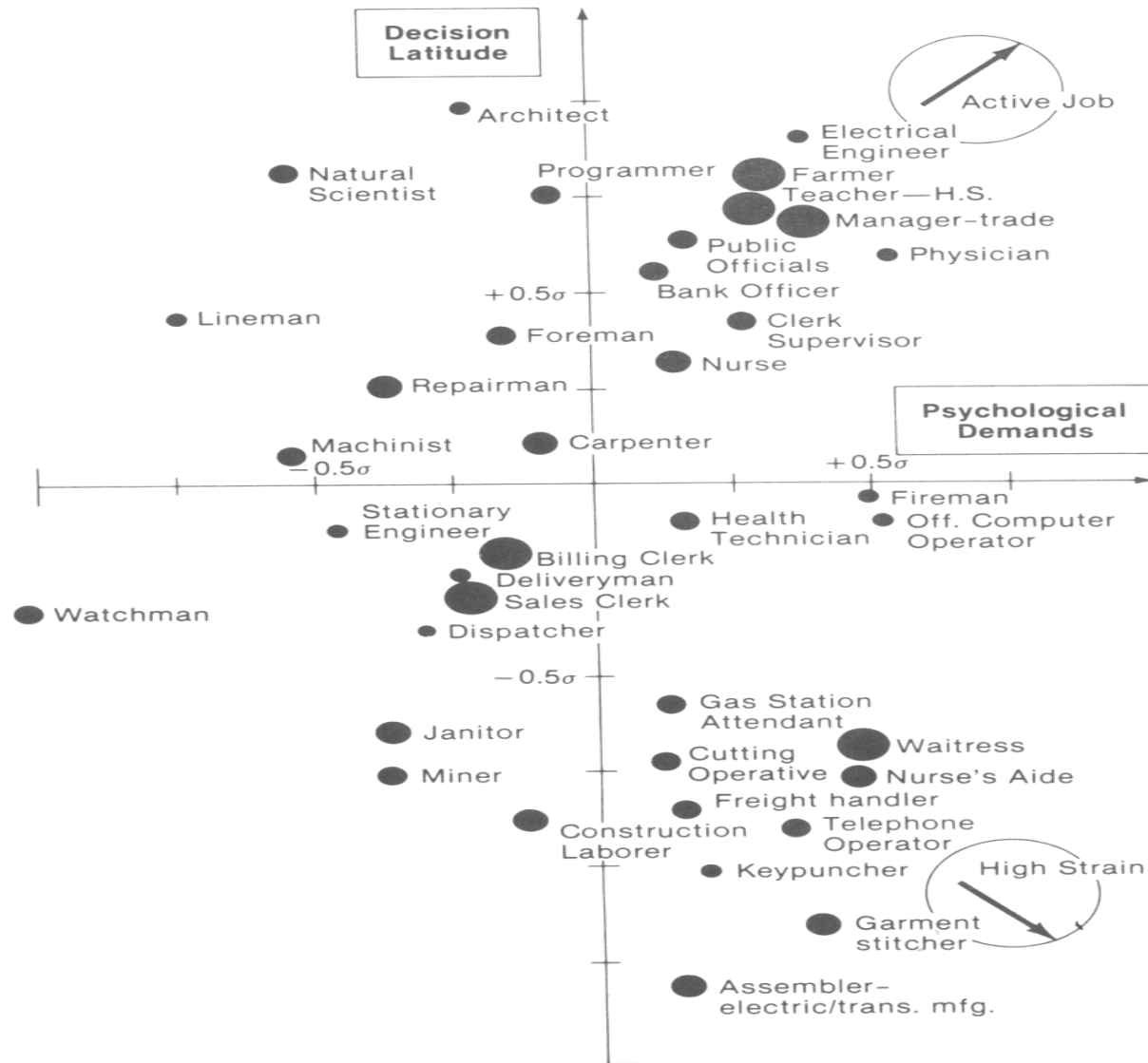
# Four Types of Work

## 4. Passive Jobs

Low Psychological Demand and Low Control for the Worker.

- Gradual Atrophying of Learned Skills Due to Skill Underutilization.
- Average Level of Illness Risk because Fewer Stressors are Confronted.

FIGURE 2-2  
*The occupational distribution of psychological demands and decision latitude*  
(U.S. males and females, N = 4,495)



SOURCE: Data from Quality of Employment Surveys 1969, 1972, 1977. Figure reprinted from Karasek 1989a; used with permission of Baywood Publishing Co.



# The “Toxic” Workplace

Characterized by

- Role Ambiguity
- Role Conflict
- Competition and Rivalry
- Poor Interpersonal Relationships



# Changing Workplace - - early in the next millennium

Workers as Generalists - - flexible portfolio of skills, knowledge and abilities, and multitalented; requires continuing education and “re-invention”

Leverage technology “to the max”

Restructuring/reorganizing/reconfiguring - - will continue and even accelerate in corporations worldwide



# Changing Workplace - - early in the next millennium (continued)

Demographic trends - - gender composition and age of workforce, early retirement

Increase in Service jobs - - requires “boundary spanning” - - must interact with (“deal with”) boss(es), co-workers, subordinates, irate customers or clients, sales representatives, owners, public



Leo Cullum

*"Do you want me to explain to you just why  
you're having feelings of inadequacy?"*





# Impact on Organizations

- Absenteeism
- High Rates of Illness
- Low Productivity and Work Performance
- Low Morale
- Loss of Revenue



# Impact on the Worker

Increase risk of Physical Disease

- Cardiovascular Disease
- Hypertension
- Gastrointestinal Disorders
- Musculoskeletal Problems

# Model of Job Stress and Health

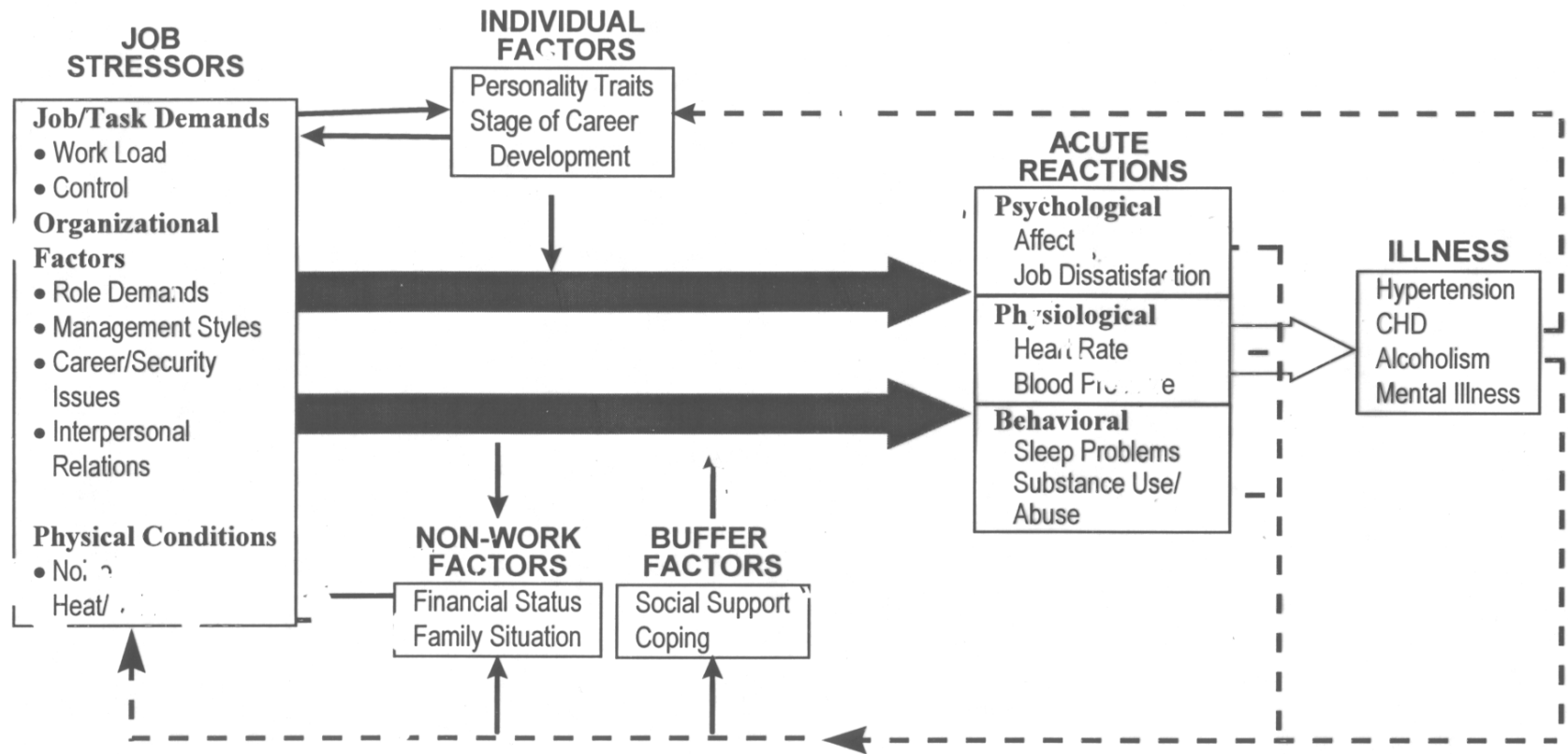


Figure 2.1 Model of Job Stress and Health

Hurrell, J. (1987). An overview of organizational stress and health. In L. Murphy & T. Schoenborn (Eds.), *Stress management in work settings*. US Dept. of Health & Human Services (NIOSH) Publication #87-111, Washington, D.C.



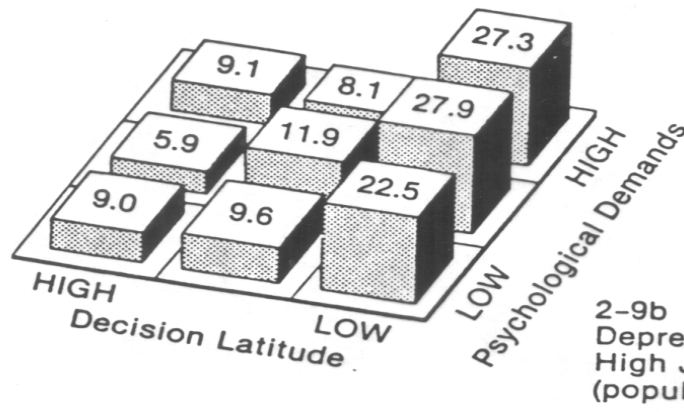
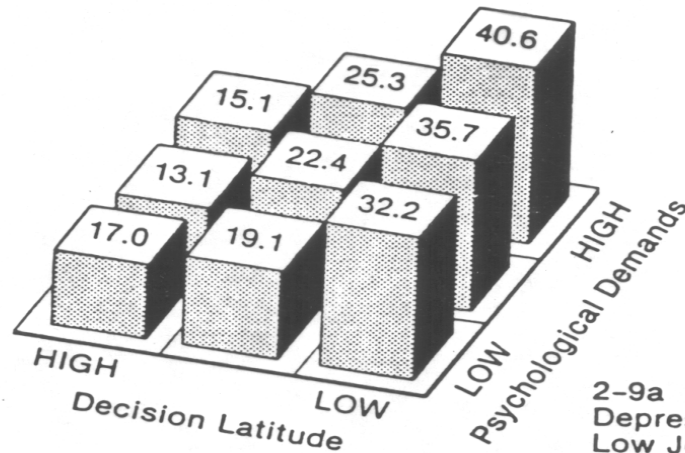
# Impact on the Worker

Increase risk of Psychological Disorders

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Burnout
- PTSD Symptoms
- Conversion Disorders

FIGURE 2-9 (a-b)  
*Social support, the demand/control model, and depression*  
 (U.S. males and females, N = 2,679)

Number on vertical bar is percentage in each job category with symptoms.



NOTE: For discussion of depression indicator, see p. 49n. Cell sizes, reading from left to right, are as follows (see p. 49n), for low support—high demands: 126, 158, 244; medium demands: 99, 152, 129; low demands: 234, 251, 151.

SOURCE: Data from Quality of Employment Surveys 1972, 1977.



# Impact on the Worker

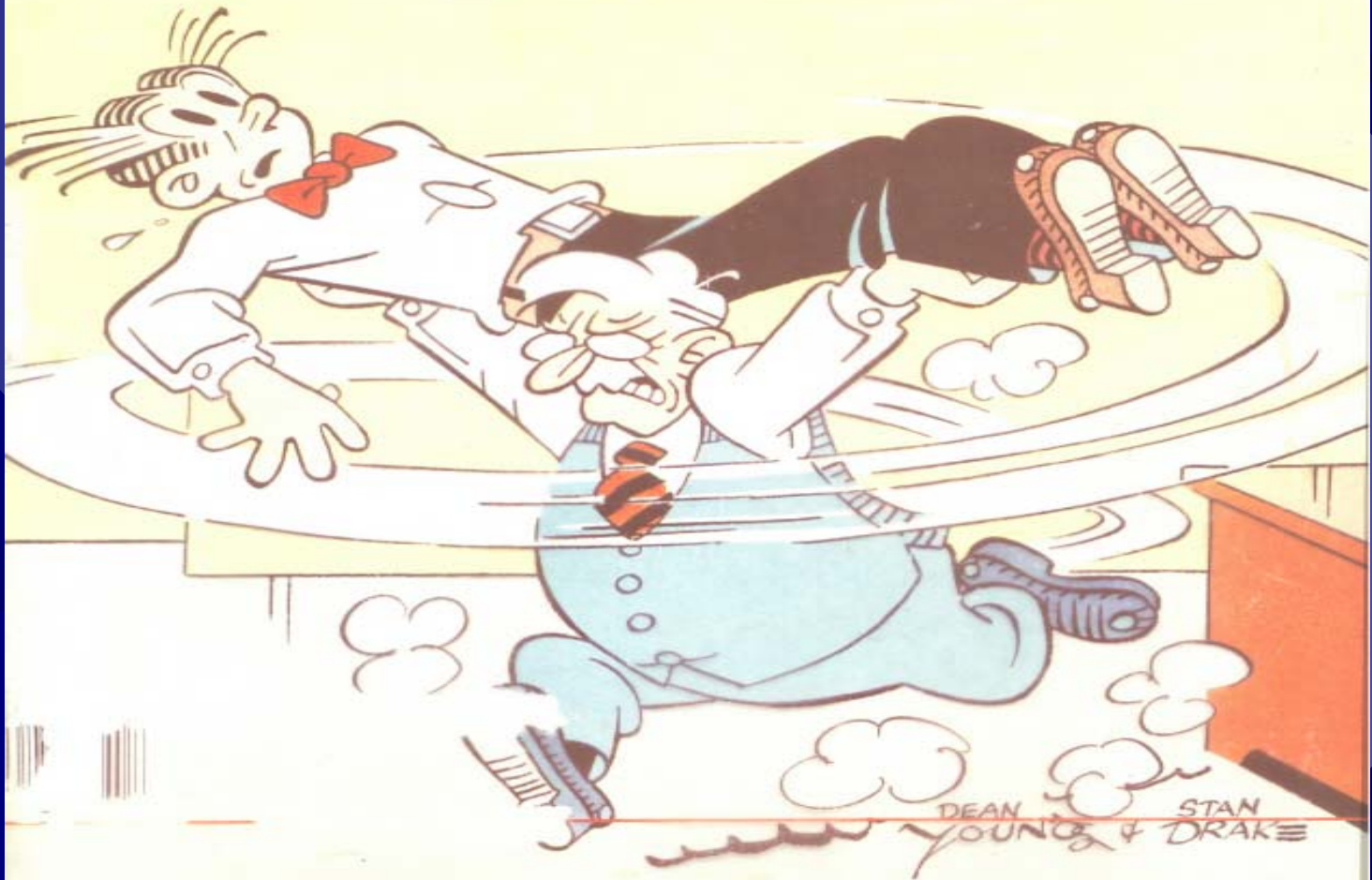
Increase in Negative Behavioral Outcomes

- Absenteeism
- Substance Abuse
- Increased Errors/Accidents
- Decreased Recreation/Social Isolation
- Domestic Discord



# Stress on the Job

What You and the Boss Can Do About It





# Stress Prevention Strategies

Reducing Individual Vulnerability with Education:

- Assertiveness Training
- Conflict Resolution Skills
- Analysis of the Role of the Environment to Avoid Self Imposed Blame






# Stress Prevention Strategies

- Develop a “Sounding Board”
- Meditation/Relaxation Programs
- Increase Recreation to Balance Stressors
- Increase Cardiovascular Activity
- Biofeedback
- Identify Your “Stress Style”



# Six Ways of Relating to Stress

◦ *(from Schafer, 1987)*

1. **Stress Seekers** (“stress addicts”) - Thrive on challenge, risk and stimulation.
  2. **Stress Avoiders** - Thrive on security and familiarity (may be realistic or based on irrational fear).
  3. **Distress Seekers** - Thrive on misery, crisis and martyrdom - usually stems from childhood.
  4. **Distress Avoiders** - Thrive on health and contentment and avoid distress.
  5. **Distress provokers** - Thrive on creating misery, disharmony and upset for others.
  6. **Distress reducers** - These are “natural healers”; promote health, happiness and growth.
- 

# Stress Prevention Strategies

Have your Workstation Ergonomically Evaluated

- Take Stretch Breaks Every 20-30 min.
- Maintain 18-30 Inches from your Computer Screen
- Use a Foot Rest to Support Your Feet
- Keep Your Head and Neck in a Neutral Position

# Stress Prevention Strategies

- Inquire About Stress Prevention Programs at Work
- Develop a “Morale Team”
- Have Meetings Standing Up
- Set a “by minute” Agenda for Meetings



*"Have you ever considered another line of work?"*

# References

Karasek, R & Theorell. *Healthy Work Stress, Productivity, and the Reconstruction of Working Life*. 1990.

Levy, B.S & Wegman, D.H.  
*Occupational Health Recognizing and Preventing Work Related Disease and Injury*. 2000.

